

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
v.)	No.
)	
EIGHT THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED)	
EIGHTY DOLLARS IN U.S. CURRENCY)	
(\$8,980.00))	
)	
Defendant.)	

VERIFIED COMPLAINT OF FORFEITURE *IN REM*

COMES NOW, Plaintiff the United States of America, by and through its attorneys, Jeffrey B. Jensen, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri, and Kyle T. Bateman, Assistant United States Attorney, for said district, and brings this verified complaint for forfeiture in a civil action *in rem* against the defendant property, namely: eight thousand, nine hundred eighty dollars in U.S. currency (\$8,980.00) (the “defendant property”), and alleges as follows:

Nature of the Action and the Defendant *In Rem*

1. This *in rem* civil action arises from an investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service (the “USPIS”) leading to the seizure of the defendant property on or about September 7, 2017. As set forth below, the defendant property is subject to forfeiture pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(6) as money furnished or intended to be furnished in exchange for a controlled substance, as proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and as used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of the Controlled Substances Act, and pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) as property that constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1952.

Jurisdiction and Venue

2. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1345 and 1355, and 28 U.S.C. § 1395(b). Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1395(b) because the defendant property was seized in the Eastern District of Missouri.

Statutory Framework

3. Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(6) authorizes the civil forfeiture of “[a]ll moneys, negotiable instruments, securities, or other things of value furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance..., all proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and all moneys, negotiable instruments, and securities used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of [the Controlled Substances Act].”

4. Title 18, United States Code, Section 1952 criminalizes using the mail with intent to distribute the proceeds of any unlawful activity or otherwise promote, manage, establish, carry on, or facilitate the promotion, management, establishment, or carrying on, of any unlawful activity, and thereafter performing or attempting to perform such acts. The term “unlawful activity” includes any business enterprise involving controlled substances. 18 U.S.C. § 1952(b).

5. Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) authorizes the civil forfeiture of any property, real or personal, which constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to any offense constituting a “specified unlawful activity,” or a conspiracy to commit such offense. A violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1952 constitutes a “specified unlawful activity” pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 1961(1)(B).

Facts Giving Rise to Forfeiture

6. On or about September 5, 2017, while conducting a review of outbound express mail parcels at the St. Louis Main Post Office located within the Eastern District of Missouri,

USPIS discovered a package that had been mailed the same day from a United States Post Office in Centralia, Illinois (the “package”).

7. The package was addressed to Andrew Popellas at a location in Los Angeles, California. That address was later determined to match that of a grocery/furniture market known as “El Rancho Market.”

8. On the package was listed an apparent phone number for Andrew Popellas. Investigation revealed that the listed number is a non-working phone number.

9. The package listed a return address of Ashley Popellas at a location in Salem, Illinois.

10. On the package was also listed an apparent phone number for Ashley Popellas. Law enforcement called the phone number and the individual who answered stated that the number was his home phone number, that he did not know Ashley Popellas, and that he did not mail any packages.

11. On or about September 6, 2017, a narcotic trained canine alerted to the presence of a narcotic odor emanating from the package.

12. On or about September 7, 2017, law enforcement obtained a federal search and seizure warrant from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri to search the contents of the package.

13. Upon opening the package, law enforcement discovered a “Happy Birthday” gift bag that contained a birthday card addressed to Marshall Popellas, various children’s coloring books, a toy car, a “Bank Doggy” box.

14. Inside the “Bank Doggy” box, law enforcement discovered the defendant property in two bundles wrapped in clear plastic wrap secreted inside numerous layers of tissue paper. Wrapped around the defendant property was fabric softener sheets. In addition, the defendant property was wet and had the scent of fabric softener.

COUNT ONE – FORFEITURE
(21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6))

15. The United States incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 to 14 above as if fully set forth herein.

16. The defendant property was concealed inside the package in a manner that is consistent with known drug trafficking methods. Specifically, the defendant currency was soaked in fabric softener, and layered in boxes, tissue paper, and fabric softener sheets. A trained narcotics canine alerted to the presence of a controlled substance on the package and/or defendant property.

17. As such, the defendant property is subject to forfeiture, pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(6), as money furnished or intended to be furnished in exchange for a controlled substance, as proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and as money to be used to facilitate a violation of the Controlled Substances Act.

COUNT TWO – FORFEITURE
(18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C))

18. The United States incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 to 14 above as if fully set forth herein.

19. The defendant property is proceeds of an unlawful activity involving controlled substances and was sent through the mail with intent to distribute said proceeds and otherwise

promote, manage, establish, carry on, or facilitate the promotion, management, establishment, or carrying on, of an unlawful activity involving controlled substances.

20. As such, the defendant property is subject to forfeiture, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) as property that constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1952.

Prayer for Relief

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that notice issue on the defendant property as described above; that due notice be given to all parties to appear and show cause why the forfeiture should not be decreed; that a warrant of arrest in rem be issued according to law; that judgment be entered declaring that the defendant property be forfeited to the United States of America for disposition according to law; and that the United States of America be granted such other relief as this Court may deem just and proper, together with the costs and disbursements of this action.

Respectfully submitted,

JEFFREY B. JENSEN
United States Attorney

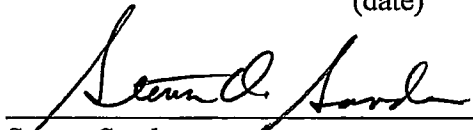
/s/ Kyle T. Bateman
KYLE T. BATEMAN, #996646DC
Assistant United States Attorney
111 South Tenth Street, 20th Floor
St. Louis, Missouri 63102

I, Postal Inspector Steven Stander, hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that I am a Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service, that I have read the foregoing Verified Complaint in rem and know the contents thereof, and that the matters contained in the Verified Complaint are true to my own knowledge, except that those matters herein stated to be alleged on information and belief and as to those matters I believe them to be true.

The sources of my knowledge and information and the grounds of my belief are the official files and records of the United States, information supplied to me by other law enforcement officers, as well as my investigation of this case, together with others, as a Postal Inspector of the United States Postal Inspection Service.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: February 12, 2018
(date)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Sander", is written over a horizontal line.

Steven Sander
Postal Inspector
United States Postal Inspection Service

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

	,)	
	plaintiff,)	
)	
v.)	Case No.
)	
	,)	
	defendant.)	

ORIGINAL FILING FORM


THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND VERIFIED BY THE FILING PARTY WHEN INITIATING A NEW CASE.

THIS CAUSE, OR A SUBSTANTIALLY EQUIVALENT COMPLAINT, WAS
PREVIOUSLY FILED IN THIS COURT AS CASE NUMBER _____
AND ASSIGNED TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE _____.

NEITHER THIS CAUSE, NOR A SUBSTANTIALLY EQUIVALENT COMPLAINT,
PREVIOUSLY HAS BEEN FILED IN THIS COURT, AND THEREFORE MAY BE
OPENED AS AN ORIGINAL PROCEEDING.

The undersigned affirms that the information provided above is true and correct.

Date:  _____

 _____
Signature of Filing Party

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff _____
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorney's (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

DEFENDANTS

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant _____
(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- ☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant
☐ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

- | | PTF | DEF | | PTF | DEF |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Citizen of This State | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Incorporated <i>or</i> Principal Place of Business In This State | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Citizen of Another State | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Incorporated <i>and</i> Principal Place of Business In Another State | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Foreign Nation | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> 120 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 130 Miller Act <input type="checkbox"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> 151 Medicare Act <input type="checkbox"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans) <input type="checkbox"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits <input type="checkbox"/> 190 Other Contract <input type="checkbox"/> 195 Contract Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 196 Franchise	PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 310 Airplane <input type="checkbox"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander <input type="checkbox"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 340 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 345 Marine Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 350 Motor Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 360 Other Personal Injury PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice <input type="checkbox"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 370 Other Fraud <input type="checkbox"/> 371 Truth in Lending <input type="checkbox"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage <input type="checkbox"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 610 Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> 620 Other Food & Drug <input type="checkbox"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 <input type="checkbox"/> 630 Liquor Laws <input type="checkbox"/> 640 R.R. & Truck <input type="checkbox"/> 650 Airline Regs. <input type="checkbox"/> 660 Occupational Safety/Health <input type="checkbox"/> 690 Other LABOR <input type="checkbox"/> 710 Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="checkbox"/> 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations <input type="checkbox"/> 730 Labor/Mgmt. Reporting & Disclosure Act <input type="checkbox"/> 740 Railway Labor Act <input type="checkbox"/> 790 Other Labor Litigation <input type="checkbox"/> 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act	<input type="checkbox"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 <input type="checkbox"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 820 Copyrights <input type="checkbox"/> 830 Patent <input type="checkbox"/> 840 Trademark SOCIAL SECURITY <input type="checkbox"/> 861 HIA (1395ff) <input type="checkbox"/> 862 Black Lung (923) <input type="checkbox"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) <input type="checkbox"/> 864 SSID Title XVI <input type="checkbox"/> 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) <input type="checkbox"/> 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	<input type="checkbox"/> 400 State Reapportionment <input type="checkbox"/> 410 Antitrust <input type="checkbox"/> 430 Banks and Banking <input type="checkbox"/> 450 Commerce <input type="checkbox"/> 460 Deportation <input type="checkbox"/> 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations <input type="checkbox"/> 480 Consumer Credit <input type="checkbox"/> 490 Cable/Sat TV <input type="checkbox"/> 810 Selective Service <input type="checkbox"/> 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410 <input type="checkbox"/> 890 Other Statutory Actions <input type="checkbox"/> 891 Agricultural Acts <input type="checkbox"/> 892 Economic Stabilization Act <input type="checkbox"/> 893 Environmental Matters <input type="checkbox"/> 894 Energy Allocation Act <input type="checkbox"/> 895 Freedom of Information Act <input type="checkbox"/> 900 Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice <input type="checkbox"/> 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
REAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 210 Land Condemnation <input type="checkbox"/> 220 Foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment <input type="checkbox"/> 240 Torts to Land <input type="checkbox"/> 245 Tort Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 290 All Other Real Property	CIVIL RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 441 Voting <input type="checkbox"/> 442 Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 443 Housing/Accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> 444 Welfare <input type="checkbox"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other <input type="checkbox"/> 440 Other Civil Rights PRISONER PETITIONS <input type="checkbox"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence Habeas Corpus: <input type="checkbox"/> 530 General <input type="checkbox"/> 535 Death Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> 540 Mandamus & Other <input type="checkbox"/> 550 Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 555 Prison Condition			

V. ORIGIN

(Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- ☐ 1 Original Proceeding ☐ 2 Removed from State Court ☐ 3 Remanded from Appellate Court ☐ 4 Reinstated or Reopened ☐ 5 Transferred from another district (specify) ☐ 6 Multidistrict Litigation ☐ 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):

Brief description of cause:

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23

DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:

JURY DEMAND: ☐ Yes ☐ No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE

DOCKET NUMBER

DATE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44**Authority For Civil Cover Sheet**

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

I. (a) Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.

(b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)

(c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".

II. Jurisdiction. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.C.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.)

III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.

IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerks in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.

V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.

Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment. (7) Check this box for an appeal from a magistrate judge's decision.

VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. **Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity.** Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553

Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service

VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.

Demand. In this space enter the dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded or indicate other demand such as a preliminary injunction.

Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.

VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
v.)	No.
)	
EIGHT THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED)	
EIGHTY DOLLARS IN U.S. CURRENCY)	
(\$8,980.00))	
)	
Defendant.)	

WARRANT FOR ARREST OF PROPERTY

TO: THE UNITED STATES MARSHAL AND/OR ANY OTHER DULY AUTHORIZED
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

Whereas, on February 12, 2018, the United States of America filed a Verified Complaint for Civil Forfeiture in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, against the above-named defendant property, alleging that said property is subject to seizure and civil forfeiture to the United States for the reasons mentioned in the complaint; and

WHEREAS, the defendant property is currently in the possession, custody, or control of the United States; and

WHEREAS, in these circumstances, Supplemental Rule G(3)(b)(i) directs the Clerk of the Court to issue an arrest warrant in rem for the arrest of the defendant property; and

WHEREAS, Supplemental Rule G(3)(c) provides that the warrant of arrest in rem must be delivered to a person or organization authorized to execute it;

NOW THEREFORE, you are hereby commanded to arrest the above-named defendant property by serving a copy of this warrant on the custodian in whose possession, custody, or

control the property is presently found, and to use whatever means may be appropriate to protect and maintain it in your custody until further order of this Court,

YOU ARE FURTHER COMMANDED, promptly after execution of this process, to file the same in this Court with your return thereon, identifying the individuals upon whom copies were served and the manner employed.

GREGORY J. LINHARES, CLERK
United States District Court

By: _____
Deputy Clerk

Date: _____